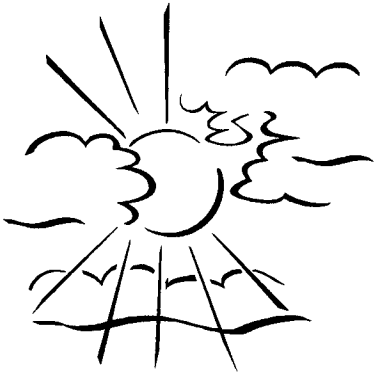


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# **Articles in Today's Clips**

## **Monday, August 8, 2005**

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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Published August 7, 2005

## **Custody fight frustrates local couple Judge to meet with attorneys Thursday in Holey adoption**

By Chris Andrews  
Lansing State Journal

Four months after a federal judge ruled in their favor, Chadd and Tamera Smith still are fighting to get back the girls they adopted in 2003 but haven't seen in more than a year-and-a-half. The DeWitt couple hoped to regain custody immediately after the April 5 ruling that judicial orders undoing the adoptions - without notice or a chance to be heard - violated their constitutional rights.

Instead, the case has bounced between various state courts and judges since April.

A gag order imposed by a judge no longer involved in the case prevents the competing couples - the Smiths and Donna and Jonathan Cromwell of Farmington Hills - from talking about the specifics of the case. But the Smiths' frustration is evident.

"I think it is just unheard of that you can have children and not see them and not be able to talk about the case when you're trying to bring them home," Tamera Smith said.

Jonathan Cromwell said the girls are doing well. He declined further comment, citing the gag order.

The case was recently assigned to Genesee County Probate Judge Allen Nelson after judges in Clinton and Oakland counties couldn't agree on who should hear the case. Nelson and attorneys will hold a status conference Thursday to discuss what the issues are and establish a schedule for hearing motions and proceeding.

The case - which began in 2003 - has drawn national attention, led to changes in state law and created anxiety among foster and adoptive parents who fear that final orders of adoption aren't necessarily final.

The girls, who turn 4 and 3 this month, are the daughters of Jennifer and Patrick Holey of Lansing. Patrick Holey died after a drug overdose in April 2002 in a suicide pact while the couple was under investigation for a sexual assault.

Jennifer Holey survived and is serving a prison sentence for the assault. Her parental rights have been terminated.

The Smiths were the girls' foster parents and wanted to adopt them. So did the Cromwells. Donna Cromwell is the first cousin of the girls' grandmother. The Cromwells believe the girls should be with their biological family.

The Michigan Children's Institute, part of the Michigan Family Independence Agency, studied both families and recommended the Smiths, and a Clinton County judge finalized the adoption in March 2003.

But the Cromwells had appealed the institute's recommendation in Oakland County, where they live. The Smiths weren't informed about the hearing that followed, and an Oakland County judge

overturned the adoption without hearing from the Smiths or the Michigan Children's Institute official who had recommended the adoption.

The girls have lived with the Cromwells since May 2003 while lawsuits have dragged on. The Smiths haven't been allowed to visit the girls since October 2003.

The Smiths refused to give up. They have challenged the decisions in state and federal courts. The case has led to changes in state law so that cases don't bounce between counties and all parties are heard.

In April, U.S. District Judge Paul Borman ruled that the Smiths were the legal parents of the girls in March 2003 and had the right to be involved in proceedings involving them. The Cromwells have appealed his ruling.

Borman left it to the state courts to take it from there. The Smiths had hoped to get a quick court order to pick up the girls.

But nothing has been quick in this case.

Clinton County Probate Judge Lisa Sullivan initially took the case but recused herself, and the case moved to Clinton County Circuit Court Chief Judge Jeffrey Martlew.

The State Court Administrator's Office assigned the case to Nelson in Genesee County to resolve a conflict over whether the case belonged in Clinton County or Oakland County.

Nelson recently appointed the University of Michigan Child Advocacy Law Clinic as the guardian ad litem to represent the children.

Janet Snyder, executive director of the children's advocacy group Hear My Voice, said the case has taken far too long to resolve.

"Children should be able to count on their finalized adoption," Snyder said. "The fact that the courts have taken such a huge amount of time to determine the final, final outcome is really, really difficult."

Contact Chris Andrews at 377-1054 or [candrews@lsj.com](mailto:candrews@lsj.com).

August 6, 2005

## **Infant clings to life after injuries**

FROM TRAVERSE CITY RECORD EAGLE STAFF REPORTS

TRAVERSE CITY - An infant who suffered severe injuries when he was allegedly thrown by his mother's boyfriend remains in critical condition.

Cameron Strang, 11 months, has been at DeVos Children's Hospital in Grand Rapids since July 24 after Jon Fahrner, 28, allegedly threw Cameron down on a kitchen floor after the child spit up milk.

Grand Traverse County Sheriff's officials said Cameron landed on his head in the fall, which caused paralysis from a broken back and partial brain damage.

Fahrner was watching Cameron at a home on M-72 while his mother, Amy Strang, was at work in Traverse City.

Doctors in Grand Rapids told detectives that it was "not likely" Cameron would survive the injuries.

Fahrner, who is being held in the Grand Traverse County Jail on \$1 million bond, is scheduled to appear in court for a preliminary examination on Monday.

## **8/16 5 16 Examiner cites fan in baby's death**

**GRAND RAPIDS —** A window fan used to cool a baby's bedroom fell into her crib as she slept, landing on top of the 3-month-old and suffocating her, authorities said.

Ava Nicole Buck was sleeping face-down when the nearly 10-pound fan fell and pushed her face into the mattress, police Capt. Jeff Hertel said. The baby probably wasn't strong enough to roll over or raise her head against the fan, Dr. Stephen Cohle, Kent County's medical examiner, told The Grand Rapids Press. He ruled Monday's death an accident.

*From staff and wire reports*

August 6, 2005

# **Man sought on sex abuse charges**

## **FROM STAFF REPORTS**

TRAVERSE CITY - A downstate man is facing charges he allegedly abused a young girl sexually at a Traverse City motel. John Erick Heideman, 40, of Clinton Township, is being sought on two felony counts of criminal sexual conduct - in the first and second-degree - for allegedly having sex contact with a 7-year-old girl at the Econo Lodge Motel on July 16 and 17.

The victim told state police that Heideman allegedly forced her to perform sexual acts at the motel.

Heideman, who could face up to life in prison for the assault, allegedly confessed to state troopers in Newaygo that he made the young girl perform sex acts while in Traverse City.

# **Man, 26, faces sex charge**

Monday, August 08, 2005

A 26-year-old Twin Lake man has been charged with providing alcohol to a teenage girl and sexually touching her, according to the Muskegon County Sheriff's Department.

Peter John Harmon, of 2448 Cherry, Lot 137, was arraigned in 60th District Court Wednesday on charges of fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct involving force or coercion and contributing to the delinquency of children.

Visiting Judge Richard J. Pasarela set bail at \$5,000 cash or surety and preliminary examination for Aug. 15. The sex offense is a two-year high-court misdemeanor and the other offense is a 90-day misdemeanor.

The incident allegedly occurred Tuesday at Harmon's mobile home.

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August 5, 2005

# Police, ISD spar over sex offender

## Background check didn't turn up record

By KEITH MATHENY

Record-Eagle staff writer

CHARLEVOIX - State police defended a background check they conducted that failed to uncover the criminal history of a convicted sex offender who spent the past several years as an administrator with the Charlevoix-Emmet Intermediate School District.

And ISD officials could have discovered the administrator's past had they sought a fingerprint check allowable under federal guidelines, state police said.

ISD officials and state police swapped barbs following Sunday's arrest of Arthur Kirk, 70, director of its AmeriCorps volunteer program.

Kirk is charged with multiple felony weapons offenses after authorities discovered he owned handguns despite a long criminal history, including sex crimes with children, under another name, Arthur Kirkeby. He's free on bond while awaiting a court hearing.

The revelation prompted ISD superintendent Mark Eckhardt to criticize "deficiencies in the Michigan State Police background check system," a contention that did not sit well with state police.

State police Lt. Aaron Sweeney, who commands the Petoskey post, said in a written statement the agency determined its backgrounding system worked properly.

"Prior to Sunday night, when Kirk was arrested on three firearms-related felonies, Arthur Kirk did not have a criminal history," Sweeney said. "Once it was discovered Arthur Kirk is also Arthur Kirkeby, this alias information was immediately added to the criminal history record of Arthur Kirkeby."

Kirk's criminal background emerged after he applied for a concealed weapons permit in May and submitted to a required FBI fingerprint background check. His criminal past as Kirkeby includes at least three prior sex offenses, including a first-degree criminal sexual conduct conviction involving an 8-year-old boy in Macomb County, for which Kirkeby served five years, four months in prison and was released in 1986.

Sweeney said the ISD had the power under federal law to require a fingerprint check on volunteers such as Kirk, "which would have returned the same conviction information Kirk/Kirkeby's concealed weapons application did."

Eckhardt said the district would now require fingerprint checks for AmeriCorps volunteers as it already does for employees.

The state police background system provides a name-based search of the Michigan criminal history record, Sweeney said. Other identifiers can also be added to the record, but a match to a criminal history will not occur without a hit on the name, he said.

"This is why fingerprint-based searches are of critical importance in not only confirming the criminal record, but also the positive identification of persons," Sweeney said.

But Eckhardt continued to challenge the effectiveness of the state system.

"There are flaws in the system design if information such as Social Security number is disregarded as a primary personal identifier when determining a person's criminal background,"



he said.

Kirk's Social Security card, under the name "Arthur Kirk," contained the same number as the one Kirkeby used at the time of his arrests decades ago, Charlevoix sheriff George T. Lasater said. Kirk was not required to register as a sex offender, as his convictions came before that law was installed, and the law is not retroactive, Lasater said.

Kirk's duties with the intermediate school district were administrative for the past three years, ISD spokeswoman Dianne Litzenburger said. But he did work directly with children as an AmeriCorps volunteer in the Charlevoix Middle School in 2001, she said.

# Video-game sex, violence spurs call for regulation

Sunday, August 7, 2005

BY MARJORIE KARJALA News Staff Reporter

## **Q. What are your concerns about video games?**

A. The explicit sexual content and violence that's being created in the games. ... The repeated acts, repeated playing of these games plant the seed - and this is what's being debated, whether it is an influence or whether it's not an influence - on behaviors. But when you repeatedly play something over and over again it gives you a format of what to do if you're ever in that situation. Halo (a video game) is one that has pretty intense violence. ... The more that you kill the more you advance in the game. ... What's incredible about these games now is the graphics. The graphics are so intense that not only do you have blood that's splattering on the screen, it walks you right through (the blood). All these games are rated M for mature. ... Another game (to be introduced this fall) ... is called Bully. It will teach you how to become a bully, how to take on a bully ....

A number of national groups are saying there's a problem with this. We don't need anybody to teach a child how to become a bully.

## **Q. What would legislation pending in Michigan do and what is its status?**

A. What the legislation is proposing is that those that sell the games not sell any game that's rated M (or above) to minors. ... Some of these locations already have in place that the M-rated games will not be sold to minors and this legislation is requesting and will mandate (this provision) in all of the gaming locations.

It's my understanding that it was approved in the House and currently is in the Senate committee.

...

## **Q. Would this bill be a form of censorship?**

A. No. We can't (mandate the content of video games). That's a First Amendment right. That's why the legislation in other states failed.

## **Q. Do you think the restriction would put an undue burden on retailers?**

CONTINUED

# Video-game sex, violence spurs call for regulation

Page 2 of 2

**Q. Do you think the restriction would put an undue burden on retailers?**

A. No, I don't see any problems with this. If you go to Wal-Mart or Sam's Club to buy (a mature or adult video), it'll come up on the register and they need to see I.D. ... Some of them already do it because it's a corporate policy that they do it.

**Q. What evidence is there that playing video games influences behavior?**

A. Indiana University research with 13 to 17 year olds ... showed they had an increase in their adrenaline the more that they advanced in the game .... The prime example is of the young man out of Alabama who shot several police officers and personnel in the police station after playing repeated hours of Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas and who even as he was being arrested talked about the thrill of the chase. In his mind he acted out what he saw on the video games.

**Q. Beyond legislation, what would you like parents to do about the video games?**

A. Parents are truly being encouraged to learn about these games. It's not just a legislative issue. It's we as parents. ... Those M-rated games and even some teen rated games, we will not allow those to be played. ... That's my rule in my home.

In addition to understanding the games, ask questions as well as go to resource locations, particularly online.

At Parents Television Council or ParentsTV.org we have extensive information about gaming content and television rating content that's been analyzed and provided for parents.

Also, Protect Michigan Children has been launched. This Web site went up last week for parents to go to to get information regarding this concern about the video games.

Monday, August 8, 2005

## Inmates sew bears for kids

# Macomb County prison group donates stuffed teddies to neglected, abused Metro children.

By Christina Stolarz / The Detroit News

**NEW HAVEN** -- When George Betts-Bey was a boy, he looked to his teddy bear to help him through tough times.

"When I had nothing else, I'd grab my teddy bear and things would be fine," said Betts-Bey, 49. "To hug a teddy bear makes you feel better."

Even now, after serving 30 years in prison for armed robbery and attempted murder, Betts-Bey still smiles when he sees a teddy bear. It serves as a reminder of how life used to be and how quickly it can change.

But instead of hugging them now, Betts-Bey and seven other inmates at the Macomb Correctional Facility in New Haven took it upon themselves to make teddy bears for children throughout Metro Detroit who are abused, neglected or in crisis situations.

The prisoners have made between 450 and 500 stuffed animals in the past year and donated them to various organizations, including the Macomb County Department of Human Services, the Richmond/Lenox Emergency Medical Services and the Wayne County Sheriff's Office.

The teddy bear program is run through the Macomb chapter of the National Lifers of America Inc., which allows any prisoner who wants to better himself to give back to the community, said Betts-Bey, chapter president. Many of the members are serving life sentences.

The organization was established in 1993.

"We love doing this," Betts-Bey said. "I'm a better person than I was yesterday and I hope to be a better person tomorrow."

Michelle Williams-Ward was surprised when the inmates approached her with the idea of getting involved in community projects.

### How to help

Eight inmates at the Macomb Correctional Facility in New Haven make teddy bears each week for children throughout Metro Detroit who are abused, neglected or in a crisis situation. Here's how to donate materials or stuffed animals:

**Where:** Macomb Correctional Facility, 34625 26 Mile, New Haven

**Who:** Michelle Williams-Ward, assistant resident unit supervisor

**Contact:** (586) 749-4900, Ext. 452

*Source: Macomb Correctional Facility*

"Although they are criminals, they've done wrong in their life, they're still willing to give back to the community," said Williams-Ward, an assistant resident unit supervisor at the facility. "It's a good cause."

The inmates gather in the hobby room twice a week to draw and cut patterns on furry material, stitch together the pieces, stuff the animals and add eyes, noses and pink and red ribbons. On average, they make 25 stuffed animals a week with donated and purchased materials, said Tilmon Barnett, 42, project coordinator.

"We feel good about what we're doing," said Barnett, who has served nearly 22 years of a life sentence for murder. "There's not a lot else we can do. Since I came to prison, I've tried to keep things positive."

The eight inmates work quietly, using the skills they've learned at the facility that houses roughly 1,200 men.

Melvin Dalton sews pieces of material together while Mubarez Ahmed traces a pattern onto fabric. Nearby, Barnett rifles through several patterns separated in used envelopes. Plastic eyes are stored in old glass peanut butter jars.

It's the only activity that Walter Hatfield, 28, looks forward to each week. He's been at the facility for 18 months.

"I love doing this," said Hatfield, wearing a blue prison uniform and brushing a bear. "It gives me a sense of pride. I hope the child that receives this bear ... it gives them a lot of joy and happy times."

The teddy bears added a comforting touch to the Macomb County Department of Human Services' foster care duffel bag program, said Karen Urquhart, community resource coordinator.

The bags are given to children who are entering foster care and come filled with personal care items, basic clothing, school supplies and a small toy or stuffed animal. The prisoners donated about 100 teddy bears, Urquhart said.

"It probably gives them a sense of purpose because they're helping kids," she said. "Every kid likes to get a stuffed animal (and) it's a traumatic time for them so it's definitely a comfort item."

"It's the perfect thing to give."

*You can reach Christina Stolarz at (586) 468-0343 or [cstolarz@detnews.com](mailto:cstolarz@detnews.com).*

# State offers amnesty plan for deadbeat parents

August 6, 2005

BY BEN SCHMITT FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

There's a deal out there for deadbeat parents.

Beginning Oct. 1, the Michigan Department of Human Services is opening an amnesty program for people who are behind in their child-support payments.

Under the program, participants can pay half of the support they owe up front and pay off the rest during the amnesty period, which ends Dec. 31. In return, no criminal or civil enforcement penalties will be initiated against them.

"We hope it will put some real money in the hands of custodial parents, and it's good for parents who want some help in resolving their cases," said Marilyn Stephen, director of the department's Office of Child Support in Lansing.

"Quite honestly, no dollar runs faster back into the community than the child-support dollar," she said. "It pays the rent and the groceries and the shoes and, at this time of year, the book bag." In Michigan, \$8.6 billion is owed in child-support arrears, Stephen said. Nationally, the figure is \$100 billion.

State Rep. Alexander Lipsey, D-Kalamazoo, sponsored the legislation last year.

"I think that the majority of citizens of the state are law-abiding and want to do the right thing," said Lipsey, an attorney who used to practice family law. "This is an opportunity for them to show good faith and get out from under the threat of sanctions."

Lipsey said many divorced parents start out in a hole when it comes to child support for various reasons. Their spouse may overestimate their salary, for instance, or they don't realize that the payment meter starts running right after someone files a custody action.

"Sometimes there are situations that stand in the way of the well-intentioned child-support payer," he said. "This is a chance to get out from under it."

Some divorce lawyers are skeptical of the program, however.

R. Scott Vanderford, a Redford Township family lawyer, scoffed at the 90-day window, saying that it can take years for people to make up owed child support.

"If somebody came to me and was anxious to take advantage of amnesty, I wouldn't suggest that they do it," he said Tuesday. "I would suggest we file a motion to stop the interest and arrange for a repayment program. Even a prosecutor would probably give them more than 90 days."

Vanderford said many of his clients owe thousands of dollars. He represents one man who owes \$130,000.

"What do you get for amnesty unless a guy comes in and owes \$1,000?" he asked. "The people who are in deep doo-doo are the ones who come in. They come to me and want me to figure out a way to get them out of the hole."

Stephen countered that most people who owe child-support arrears are already on a payment plan.

"This is targeted at anybody who has the ability to pay and aren't sure how to handle the situation," she said. "This is a great opportunity to avoid criminal prosecution and clear up the matter."

Contact BEN SCHMITT at 313-223-4296 or [schmitt@freepress.com](mailto:schmitt@freepress.com).

## **County Health Plan to grow**

### **Macomb-administered plan to cover more low-income residents, some employees**

PUBLISHED: August 5, 2005

By Chad Selweski  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

As many as 15,000 uninsured Macomb County residents could receive health care coverage in the coming months as a county program for the poor branches out to a wider segment of the population.

Officials were told Thursday that the County Health Plan, serving about 3,000 impoverished residents, will expand to a second phase this fall that could add 2,000 to 3,000 additional low-income people.

In the winter, the program will broaden yet again to offer subsidized employer-provided health care that would cost each worker about \$50 a month.

"This program is due to great leadership that aims to ... meet the health care needs for many more of our residents," said county Commissioner Paul Gielegem, the Clinton Township Democrat who chairs the county board's Health Services Committee. "I think we can do a more effective job than the state can in providing these services locally."

Dozens of Michigan counties offer similar programs, but officials say Macomb's effort could quickly emerge as the state's best.

The County Health Plan will be open to anyone between the ages of 19 and 64 who is a U.S. citizen, uninsured and ineligible for Medicaid or disability.

The current Plan A program, offered to those who earn 35 percent or less of the federal poverty level -- an income of about \$260 a month -- provides primary care at a health clinic, plus access to specialists and prescription drug coverage.

The Plan B program, to be launched in October, would be available to residents living below the poverty line -- about \$15,000 a year for a family of four.

Plan C, slated for this winter, would enlist employers who don't offer fringe benefits. The employer would pay one-third of a worker's health

insurance costs, the employee would pay one-third and the county would pay one-third. Each of those three shares could amount to as little as \$50 per month.

The overall program will not eliminate the number of uninsured in the county, which has doubled to about 10 percent of the population, or about 80,000 people, in the past four years.

Much of that increase is blamed on a lagging economy and employers eliminating insurance coverage to cut costs. Some of Macomb's uninsured are young adults who choose to not seek coverage, and others are workers with middle-class incomes. But the County Health Plan is aimed at the unemployed and "working poor" who have little hope of securing coverage.

The first phase of the program, launched Dec. 1, relies on four health clinics run by a private company, Clinton Township-based Corporate Occupational Health Services. One clinic offers urgent care 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and free transportation is provided.

The County Health Plan is seeking bids through Aug. 26 for Plan B, which will offer care at local facilities. Bids are being sought from hospitals, HMOs and physician groups.

Patricia Kukula, a consultant for County Health Plan, said hospitals are eager to cooperate because it reduces the number of uninsured who seek care at emergency rooms. The program also gives doctors the ability to serve the uninsured without taking a financial loss.

Kukula said County Health Plan has quickly discovered that many of Macomb's uninsured have sought care in other counties that have had a program for years. That transfers potential income for hospitals and doctors out of Macomb.

"We were shocked. They were going to Oakland County and Detroit and everywhere else. Those dollars were going outside of the county of Macomb," she said.

The program allows county government to leverage its health care dollars by receiving a federal match of \$1.31 for every \$1 spent. By pooling other resources, Kukula said, the county could soon receive \$12 million in additional health care by contributing just \$4 million.

But the next phase will start slowly. Plan B will offer basic medical care, but will not cover services such as dental care, maternity, outpatient hospital services, home health care and mental health services.

The County Health Plan, a non-profit corporation based in Roseville, may extend coverage as the Plan B program progresses. The County Health Plan is overseen by a nine-member board, including five county officials. Enrollment for the Plan A program, available to the county's poorest residents, remains open until Sept. 30. Call (586) 469-7700.



# If your job isn't 9-to-5, where do you take kids?

Monday, August 08, 2005

By Juanita Westaby  
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- The scene at Listen & Learn Child Development Center is pretty typical: A group of preschoolers is listening to a book that helps them learn the alphabet. In another room, crawling babies happily play under the watchful eye of an attendant. But this isn't mid-morning play. It is 9:15 p.m., just after bedtime snack and tooth-brushing and just before lights out.

Welcome to night care.

Their parents are working split, graveyard, and last-minute on-call shifts at places such as Butterball Farms and Meijer Inc. or as home health-care aides. They're single, or part of the working poor. Many are separated from extended family.

"The parents need flexibility," said Jodie Robertson, owner of Listen & Learn. "They'll call and say, 'I just got called into work.'"

In the two years since Listen & Learn opened, full-time enrollment has soared to 70 children. That's not including an additional 20 slots open on each shift for last-minute full-time care, or seven slots designated for part-time. Robertson also keeps openings for drop-ins, who must give the center two hours' notice so Listen & Learn can call in its own on-call child-care attendants.

Robertson is in the process of buying 30 more beds for third-shift children. She also plans to buy a van to pick up children at their homes.

"I did hair for 17 years, and after listening to clients complain about child care, that's how I came up with the idea," she said.

While Robertson is relatively new to the child-care profession, Listen & Learn's director, Carolyn Bryant, is not. In her 18 years in the field, she has seen a "dramatic change" in working parenthood, she said.

CONTINUED

# If your job isn't 9-to-5, where do you take kids?

Page 2 of 2

Now there are "a lot more single parents," she said. "More single fathers are stepping up to the plate. Sunday work is mandatory now."

So are split shifts, and so is being on-call.

The 8 a.m. crush at the typical day-care center been joined by a 2:30 p.m. rush. Parents don't pick up children eager to talk about their day. They put sleeping children's heads on their shoulders so they can magically wake up in their own beds the next morning.

"I know a lot of kids need structure," Robertson said, especially at dinner and bedtime. "And it's no fault of the parents -- they're single -- but a lot of kids don't get the quality time of having someone sit down, reading them a story, going over their colors and letters."

As for dinner being sacred family time, the children don't sense anything amiss, Bryant said.

"The food takes care of it all," she said. "Our kids love to eat. But before they eat, they say their grace."

Robertson tries to keep her fees in line with what Family Independence Agency allots families.

At least one of her workers was a former client.

Appreciation for what they do is an almost daily occurrence. "The single dads, especially, they say, 'Wow! 24 hours a day? Where do I sign up?'" Bryant said.

A new 24-hour child-care operation in Caledonia meets different needs. "Some people have called about third-shift, but most of it is discretionary" child care, said Sheri Pekel, who opened Kid Kountry Kare this past weekend.

"We've had a lot of people ask us for a date night," Pekel said. "Teens just don't have the time (to baby-sit). If you don't have grandparents to back up, it's hard to find day care" for a night out.

## **At the heart of life: Mason family offers home to special-needs children**

Since 1970, Arlene and Fran Wanger have taken in nine children, each with some kind of disability. That's in addition to raising their two biological children - one of whom has cerebral palsy.

Arlene, 64, is up every morning at 4:30. She does at least five loads of laundry a day.

In a little more than a year, she's put 53,000 miles on the family's 15-passenger van - equipped with a wheelchair lift - driving her children to work, to school, to therapeutic horseback riding sessions, to doctor appointments around the state. She's seen them through a total of 108 surgeries.

It's more than she ever bargained for and more than most could ever handle.

Before they married in 1959, Arlene made Fran promise that they would have a big family and adopt a child with special needs.

Fran, an only child, was open to Arlene's wishes.

Arlene can't really explain why she wanted what she did back then. Maybe it was watching her father, who was always helping others. He lived to be 103. Or maybe it was her admiration for Roy Rogers and how he adopted children and cared for his daughter, who was born with Down syndrome.

A year after Arlene and Fran's wedding, she gave birth to David. He weighed 2 pounds, 13 ounces and has mild cerebral palsy, which affects his body movements and muscle coordination. Doctors said he wouldn't survive.

"I struggled with that," Arlene recalled. "I just felt I got what I asked for, just not the way I had asked for it."

Six years later, she gave birth to Angela. She was healthy but weighed only 3 pounds, 6 ounces. A healthy weight for a newborn is about 5 pounds 8 ounces.

Arlene doesn't do well with pregnancies. She needed another way to build a big family.

It was 1970; David was 10 and Angela was 4. That year the Wangers adopted Richard, 11 at the time. Then came Mary Beth and Beth Ann. Then brothers Rob and Larry. Travis. Kayla Sue.

Frances Kay. Hannah.

Seven have cognitive impairments. Three have some form of cerebral palsy. Three have visual impairments. Two use wheelchairs. One is blind. One is deaf.

Seven of their children live at the family's Mason home. They range in age from 14 to 46.

But Arlene doesn't see her children as disabled. They are her sons. Her daughters. They are her life.

She's fought school systems not wanting to give them the services they deserved. She learned sign language when Kayla Sue joined the family. When Mary Beth came, she learned to read and write Braille.

She's fought for their success. And that's all in how you measure it, she said.

David, for example, has a job folding pizza boxes at Fat Boys Pizza in Holt.

"In the hospital, when they said he wasn't going to make it, one of my prayers was that David would grow up successful and happy," Arlene said. "And who would say that David is not successful and happy? He is in his own way."

Fran likes to brag about his wife, like when she won "Mother of the Year" in a contest at the Lansing Mall a few years ago.

"I don't know how she does it," said Fran, 67, a retired state worker. "I can't keep up with her." Their daughter Angela stops by often with her 10-year-old daughter, Raven, who has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair. Angela teaches at Lansing's Beekman Center, a public school for students with developmental disabilities. She adopted Raven at age 4.

Friends pitch in when they can. Last month, Dan Robinson helped some other men from Holt Christian Church tear down an old barn in their yard.

"She sacrifices herself to give to others," Robinson said of Arlene. "I'm just amazed at how much she gives."

Most people don't know what goes on behind the scenes.

Like the crippling arthritis in Arlene's hands, hips knees and back. She doesn't talk about it.

Or the breast cancer she quietly fought while driving her kids to school, to church on Sunday and to all of their appointments.

Or the 1920s stone farmhouse with one bathroom and six tiny bedrooms the family lives in. She doesn't complain about it.

"She is wrapped in such a subtle package," said Dr. Mary Sharp, a Lansing physician who sees two of Arlene's daughters and talks with Arlene about once a month.

"Arlene is a very powerful person," Sharp said, "in ways that our society is traditionally blind to."

Contact Tracy Burton at 377-1206 or [tburton@lsj.com](mailto:tburton@lsj.com).

# Cost of caring for troubled kids rising

By Steve Gunn  
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

## MUSKEGON COUNTY

**It took us a little by surprise.** There is just a higher number of children in residential care than normal."

Beth Dick  
Muskegon County's budget manager

County commissioners, meeting Tuesday as the courts/public safety committee, tentatively approved the extra expenditure. They're expected to finalize their approval Aug. 9.

"It took us a little by surprise," said Beth Dick, Muskegon County's budget manager. "There is just a higher number of children in residential care than normal. We were not expecting the additional cost to the general fund."

"These kids kind of overwhelmed the system as a group," Johnson said. "When they come in a grouping, it's more of a challenge for everyone."

The responsibility for funding foster care and residential treatment for troubled children is shared by the federal, state and county governments.

The majority of troubled youngsters, whose families qualify for various types of social service assistance, are covered by a combined federal/state fund.

But a significant minority of kids, whose families do not qualify for assistance, are covered by the county's Child Care Fund. The foster care portion of that fund is split, more or less evenly, between the county and state.

Over the past year, the number of kids getting county/state funding has swollen.

On June 30, 2004, a total of 44 children under the county fund were in foster care or residential treatment. A year later, that number rose to 58.

The type of treatment most kids are receiving has also become more expensive.

In June 2004, 17 kids covered by the county fund were in foster care, and only one was in a residential treatment center. This year, 36 kids were in foster care while seven were in a residential treatment center.

Foster care can range in cost from \$17 to \$41 per day, Johnson said. The average cost of adolescent residential care is about \$160 per day, she said.

The need to put six former runaways in residential treatment was expensive but necessary, Johnson said.

"We've been very successful in finding these children," Johnson said. "As we find them, we often discover that their needs may be very difficult to manage in a foster care setting. That resulted in a higher number of residential placements this year."

Dick said the county asked the human services staff to double-check their referrals for residential treatment, to make sure they all were necessary.

Dick said she now believes the placements were legitimate.

Luckily, the county was running a small surplus when the new foster care expenses were discovered, Dick said. So even with the added expense, the county is still projecting an approximate \$15,000 general fund surplus for fiscal 2005, she said.

The good news is that the runaways are coming home, thanks to a special initiative by the Michigan Department of Human Services.

But the returning adolescents need special attention, generally in the form of foster care or residential treatment. And the cost of that treatment is putting an extra strain on the already tight Muskegon County budget.

Fourteen chronic runaways have returned to the county since last fall, according to Jane Johnson, director of the Muskegon County Department of Human Services.

Eleven came back due to the efforts of the human services department, which dedicated extra resources to tracking and retrieving the high-risk kids throughout the state.

Many of those kids, who have an average age of about 16, have special needs that must be addressed before they can become successful adults, Johnson said.

For some, area foster care homes have been appropriate, according to Johnson. But six children have been sent to distant residential care facilities for special treatment, she said.

The former runaways, and the cost of their treatment, have helped create an unexpected expense for Muskegon County.

The county originally intended to spend \$287,444 on foster care this fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30. But now the estimated cost has increased to \$357,736.

# **Program helps troubled teens 'calm life down'**

Web-posted Aug 8, 2005

By ADAM BARK  
Special to The Oakland Press

"John" has had a rough life.

Growing up poor and moving frequently, he hasn't had the stability of living in the same house. His parents, who were abused themselves, are, in turn, abusive.

But despite his difficult upbringing, he's trying diligently to move forward. Like other teens in similar situations, he has turned to the Teen Transitions program for help.

Since its introduction in February, the program has had 16 adolescents join.

It was created by the Catholic Social Services of Oakland County and is designed to help teens and young adults who are "aging out" of foster care or living on their own assimilate into the world. The majority of people in the program are between ages 14 and 20 and are either living in foster homes or with relatives. All have had tumultuous upbringings like John, who is a composite of the types of kids helped by the program.

The goal is to help teens make the transition into adulthood and focus on the skills they'll need in life.

"Most of these kids have experienced a great deal of separation and loss," said Peggy Akrigg, director of Family Support Services. "Therefore, the program has to work on things many of us take for granted, such as personal hygiene and communication skills such as listening, self-control and conflict resolution."

Each teen is assigned a mentor, volunteers that Akrigg says are the "critical element" of the program. Mentors spend three to five hours a week with the teens, helping them to understand and develop their goals and needs, expanding their horizons, and generally being good role models.

Once the teens have mastered the basics, they are prepared with employment training. The first step is determining their interests.

"A lot of times it's like, 'Gee, I don't know what I want to do,' " said Akrigg.

After they've considered a field of work, the program tries to help, including encouraging employers to offer paid co-op opportunities.

"The really huge focus in this (program) is education and training," Akrigg said. "If they're not currently in school, participants are encouraged to re-enroll or obtain a GED. They are taught how to prepare a resume, write a cover letter, and interview for employment."

Participants are also taught other essential skills, from renting or leasing a house or apartment to being a smart shopper.

While the program was conceived as one where teens would visit a Catholic Social Services center to participate, it quickly became apparent that was not feasible.

That's because there aren't enough foster homes in Oakland County, said Akrigg, so some of the teens have to be moved to other counties, such as Wayne, Genesee and Washtenaw.

Because many teens live far from the center, mentors go to teens' foster homes because, "we respect the needs of the kids instead of making them come to us," Akrigg said.

She says she believes the program helps to "calm life down a little" and give teens some stability in their otherwise chaotic lives.

For information about the Teen Transitions program or to volunteer, contact Peggy Akrigg at (248) 334-3595, Ext. 3229.

# Eaton County court guardian

July 31, 2005

## being investigated

By KURT MADDEN  
Lansing Community  
Newspapers

CHARLOTTE — An attorney who acts as court-appointed guardian for 150 people unable to manage their own financial affairs is being investigated for possibly embezzling funds.

Charles M. Zwick, 56, became the target of a investigation by several police departments after hundreds of thousands of dollars were unaccounted for in a case involving a 93-year-old Alzheimer's patient.

Zwick, a well-known Charlotte attorney, failed to attend a hearing July 22

in Eaton County Probate Court during which it was revealed he had closed several bank accounts and did not explain what he did with the money.

Probate Judge Michael Skinner, and Philip Vilella, the attorney for the victim's estate, attempted repeatedly to reach Zwick by phone, fax and e-mail.

Zwick is seen almost daily in the Eaton County Court system because of the number of cases he has handled over the years. He has not been seen since July 19, according to court records.

A judgment for \$342,054.26 was entered against Zwick by Judge

Skinner on July 22 for Sandra Ranville, a Holt resident and the woman's sole heir.

Skinner, in making his ruling, said gross mismanagement was obvious, and it was possible that embezzling occurred.

Eaton County Prosecuting Attorney Jeff Sauter attended that hearing as an observer. Sauter said Tuesday, July 26, "A multi-agency investigation is in progress, led by the Charlotte Police Department. Charlotte is assisted at this time by investigators from the Eaton County prosecutor's office, Eaton County sheriff department and the Michigan State Police."

Zwick's role is described as the county's guardian, said Michael Kutas, administrator for circuit and probate courts. Many of his cases involve people who are receiving Social Security and Medicaid payments, Kutas said.

"This is a very unusual situation. Charlie is a fixture here. He is very well known, very popular, very unassuming and low key. He is one of those guys who has been here a long time before many of the judges took the bench. He has a large caseload, and everybody knows him," Kutas said.

"What makes the whole situation suspicious is

that Charlie is not here to answer the key questions," Kutas explained.

Zwick had the responsibility to look after the financial affairs, including bill paying, for people the court determines are unable to make decisions, Kutas said.

He said Tuesday there is no evidence of wrong-doing or mismanagement with other court-appointed cases, and said another guardian would be sought to handle key bills for the other wards of the court.

Ranville, whose mother died last August after being diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, formally asked to have Zwick removed as her mother's official guardian when financial irregularities were discovered.

Among the suspicious activities were:

- withdrawing more than \$320,000 from several bank accounts and failing to account for the money;
- failing to pay real estate taxes for the woman's home for two years and leaving her home uninsured for six months;
- reporting that the woman's income taxes return were completed, but providing no evidence they were filed;
- failing to account for what happened to the woman's automobile.

Court documents show some of the irregularities occurred as early as 2001, the first year he began handling the woman's affairs. In one instance, Zwick withdrew \$84,828 the State Employees Credit Union and closed the account but did not explain what he did with the money.



Local News

## **Workshops aimed at helping kids, parents discuss abstinence**

By ERICA KOLASKI  
Tribune Staff Writer

CHEBOYGAN - A series of workshops are slated to help parents and teenagers better communicate about abstinence.

The workshops are sponsored by the Coalition to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and Promote Abstinence and funded by a grant through the Cheboygan Youth Center, said spokeswoman Debra Turnbull.

She said that the project is endorsed by the Cheboygan Area Ministerial Association.

"The goal of this project is obviously to prevent teen pregnancy," she said. "But we are also working to develop open lines of communication between teens and adults about safe, healthy behavior."

Turnbull said that locally, teen pregnancy rates are off the charts.

"We are working to build a model program to promote communication and raise awareness of the consequences of teen pregnancy," she said.

"Obviously there is the moral issue, but the practical, risk, health and emotional aspects of this subject also need to be addressed," she said.

In a series of open public workshops, teens and adults will tackle topics that include communication skills, decision making, encouragement, cooperation, respect, building strong relationships and active listening, she said.

"All too often, parents and teens don't talk about sex," said Turnbull. "These workshops will give them the tools to form open lines of communication."

She said that parents and teens should be as comfortable talking about sexual issues as they are about what to have for dinner.

"We already have a focus group of teens who want answers from responsible, caring adults. They are very candid about their questions and expect the same," Turnbull said. "As adults we need to work to counter the message that media is giving to these teens. Kids need to know that not 'everyone is doing it.'"

The workshops will be held from 7 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. at the St. Thomas Lutheran Church on Wednesday and Aug. 17 and Sept. 7 and 14.

The project culminates with an open public meeting from 7 p.m. until 9 p.m. Sept. 27 at the Cheboygan Memorial Hospital conference room.

"This will be a time for the community to come together as a whole," said Turnbull.

At each meeting, refreshments will be served and those who attend will leave with a little incentive.

"We will be giving away gas cards, movie passes and food coupons at each workshop," she said.

Everyone who attends will also have a chance to win an Ipod or a digital camera.

"Each time you attend, you will have a chance to register your name in the Ipod or digital camera drawing," said Turnbull.

Anyone who would like more information should contact Turnbull at 597-0185. She is the local liaison for the Coalition to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and Promote Abstinence.

Published August 8, 2005

## **Newly opened site gives Catholic charity a centralized location for many services \$3.2M renovation more accessible for clients**

By Hugh Leach  
Lansing State Journal

A charitable group that's helped the Lansing area's poor and oppressed for more than 50 years has a new home and a new name.

Catholic Social Services of Lansing/St. Vincent Home - now known as St. Vincent Catholic Charities - has centralized its services in the former St. Vincent Home for Children at 2800 W. Willow St.

The changes will make services more convenient for clients, improve security, streamline efficiency and provide a more pleasant environment for clients and staff, said Sherri Solomon-Jozwiak, the organization's president and chief executive officer.

"We had been in seven different sites scattered across Lansing," she said.

Now all services except a home for abused and homeless women and families are in one complex.

"It will make it easier for clients to find us, and it's good for our operating efficiency," Solomon-

Jozwiak said. "We don't have to pay mileage or lose time on the road traveling between sites." The new St. Vincent Home for Children opened a year ago next door to the old home. The old building underwent a \$3.2 million renovation, and the offices to be located there were moved in the last week.

Inside, the building is bright and inviting. There are no office doors, and every office is near a window.

Other sites often had heating and cooling problems, stairs that were difficult to manage for some clients and volunteers, and offices on multiple floors.

### **St. Vincent Catholic Charities**

- Location: 2800 W. Willow St., Lansing
- Former name: Catholic Social Services of Lansing/St. Vincent Home
- Mission: To promote and enhance the quality and dignity of life by providing professional, compassionate services to individuals and families in need of emotional, physical and spiritual support
- Services: Residential home for abused and neglected children, adoption, foster care, aid to parents, youth mentoring, family counseling, foster grandparents, senior companions, bereavement support, interfaith respite, refugee resettlement and employment assistance, immigration assistance, transitional housing for homeless and abused women and their children

#### **On the Web**

- St. Vincent Catholic Charities: [www.css-svh.org](http://www.css-svh.org)

Source: St. Vincent Catholic Charities

"This building is great," said Cheval Breggins, director of marketing and media relations. "It allows us to have a one-stop service area for the community that's more accessible to clients and improves the internal communication among our staff. Plus, there is a big cost savings."

The building was given to the organization by the Catholic Diocese of Lansing, eliminating the need to pay rent at other sites.

"It's cleaner and provides fewer distractions to learning that will allow our clients to be more focused," said Tom Ori, education coordinator, as he wiped off tables in a training room where clients learn job readiness skills and English as a second language.

Farhad Silevany, volunteer supervisor for refugee services, said the new building also provides security that was lacking in the former sites, some of which had been robbed several times.

"Our administration is right here, so we can get something right away if we need it," he added.

"Also everything's on one level so if immigration services needs a translator, we're just down the hall."

For Solomon-Jozwiak, the new location has another plus.

"I like being able to remember why I do this work and being close to our clients," she said.

"I didn't have a lot of interaction with clients and some of the staff in my former office."

Contact Hugh Leach at 377-1119 or [hleach@lsj.com](mailto:hleach@lsj.com).

Traverse City Record-Eagle

August 8, 2005

### **Cheers**

- - To the volunteers who will operate the Au Sable Free Clinic in Grayling and those who donated money to make it possible. The clinic is for low-income residents of Crawford, Roscommon, Oscoda and Montmorency counties who do not have medical insurance or Medicaid coverage. Organizers expect to see 50 to 75 patients per month to start, but also expect that number to grow.
  
- To the Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce and the Poverty Reduction Initiative for inviting poverty expert Ruby Payne to the area recently and for continuing to spotlight the need for a community-wide effort to reduce poverty in the area. The aim of the initiative is to reduce area poverty by 25 percent by 2010.

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